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SECTION H - Timetabling Tips, Tactics & Tricks

Contents

The list below shows the contents of this section, with the **key words** in bold. See also the articles in the [Support Centre](#) and the many HelpMovies.



You are advised not to use too many of these timetabling 'tricks', especially in the first year of using **TimeTabler**, as most of them reduce your solution-space (and so, cumulatively, they may make your timetable impossible).

H1 How can I place and lock **fixed items** on the timetable?

H2 How can I keep 'fixed' **Part-timers**/Senior Staff/Year-tutors free at specific times?

H3 **The Staff Availability Screen:**

Staff Availability												
Staff Availability Unavailable period												
Mon	3	4	5	Tues	3	4	5	Wed	3			

H4 How can I keep a 'floating' **Part-timer** free for a definite number of periods but at unspecified times?

H5 How can I give a teacher a **free** half-day block each week?

H6 How can I try to ensure each Teacher has 1 '**free**' period ('PPA' time) per day? See also H32.

H7 How can I schedule a Departmental **Meeting**, or a Senior Management Meeting?

H8 How can I schedule a Teacher to be '**free**' for a period, but only in an afternoon? Or for scheduled numeracy / literacy lessons to be only in the morning?

H9 How can I make sure a specialist **Room** is not double-booked?

H10 How can I make sure a unique **Room** is not used at certain times of the week?

H11 How can I ensure one of the Deputy Heads is always **free** to deal with crises?

H12 How can I enter a **non-rectangular week** (fixed) for all classes?

H13 How can I enter a **non-rectangular week** for some classes only?

Class Availability												
Class Availability Unavailable period												
	Mon	3	4	5	Tues	3	4	5				

H14 **The Class Availability Screen:**

H15 How can I specify staggered **Lunch-breaks**?

H16 How can I specify floating **Lunch-breaks** between fixed times?

H17 How can I ensure that a Teacher gets a **Lunch-break**, between certain times?

H18 How can I schedule a Class to be at the local **College**?

H19 What is the quickest way to **update last year's Year-10 Batch** for this year's Year-11? And update a **teacher's initials** throughout the system? And a **class scheduling name**?

H20 How can I get the Sixth Form groups to be assigned automatically to **small rooms**?

H21 How can I ensure that two different activities are **not** scheduled **on the same day**?

H22 How can I specify Teacher-teams which are **not quite consistent**?

H23 How can I specify a **Block** of Maths 'sets' when 1 group is shared between 2 teachers?

H24 **Container Blocks:**

Container Blocks																
Container Blocks in this Schedule																
	Mon	3	4	5	6	7	8	Tues	3	4	5	6	7	8	Wed	3

H25 Specifying a **Container Block**.

H26 How can I '**Clone**' a Batch?

H27 How can I '**Clone**' a Schedule? How can I **Duplicate** a week, for a **2-week timetable**?

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H30 Our 3rd and 4th **Years (Grades) join together** for some lessons. How do I do this?

H31 How can I label my Option Blocks/Columns on the Priority Screen and on the final **printouts**?

H32 How can I label my Maths Sets and other groups on the **printouts**? And add '**PPA**' labels?

H33 How do I prevent items from appearing on the final **Printout**?

H34 How can I **print** the timetable labels in Welsh?

H35 How can I show the **start-finish times** for each Period on the printouts?

H36 How can I include a **Registration** period on the timetable?

H37 How can I get **individual Student timetables**?

H38 What if I don't want to name a specific Teacher? Can I do a '**Block Timetable**'?

H39 **Using Teacher Pools:**

Teacher Pools			
No.	Pool Name	Size	Pool of Teachers
1	=PE	2	AS AB
2	=pe	2	SM SO

H40 We have only 5 **Science Labs**. How can I ensure I keep within this limit?

H41 For Science, how can I ensure a Double period in a Lab and a Single in a Classroom?

H42 How can I get a good **spread** in a 10-day timetable cycle?

H43 How can I keep 2 **activities together** on the timetable?

H44 How should I deal with staff who teach a **second (or third) subject**?

H45 In our primary school / prep department, how do I schedule a class to their **home-room**?

H46 Using Special Resources for timetabling tricks.

H47 Special Locations/Dummy Classes and Special Resources/Dummy Teachers.

Section I - Worked Examples

In most schools it is a straightforward process to specify the data. However **if your curriculum is complex or unusual**, you may have to decide carefully in the first year of using **TimeTabler** how to specify the data to get the result you want. Advice is available from the HelpLine.

In this section some of the ideas outlined in the last section are developed further in specific contexts. This is done in the hope that if you have an unusual timetabling problem you may find a similar problem here, and so gain some ideas about how to solve it with **TimeTabler**.

See also the **HelpMovies**, especially if you are thinking of using Container Blocks.

Worked Examples 1 to 8 are for solving problems in the 'Sixth Form' (ie. Years 12 and 13).

These methods are particularly concerned with keeping as much flexibility as possible in the way that Years 12 and 13 are specified in **TimeTabler**. All too often the involved timetabling of this area of the curriculum means that the 'tail' of the Sixth Form wags the 'dog' of the main school.

In outline, the worked examples are:

- 1. Keeping flexibility in Years 12 and 13 using 'student-batches'.**
This method is particularly useful for schools with smaller Sixth Forms without a system of formal Option Blocks (electives/columns).
ie. the school does its best to allow the students 'free choice' of their subjects.
It is also useful for Special Schools with individualised learning programmes.
- 2. Keeping flexibility using a 'clash table' grid.**
This method can be used for the Upper Sixth (Y13) to use the extra flexibility that is potentially available in Year 13 (due to some subject-combinations not having been chosen by students).
- 3. Keeping flexibility within Option Blocks (columns) in Years 12 and 13.**
Many schools use a formal Options (electives) scheme with definite Blocks (columns).
This method uses the idea of Container Blocks to keep the groups within their Option Blocks while exploiting the flexibility that is available because of shared or split teaching of the groups.
- 4. Keeping flexibility in Years 12 and 13 when Option Blocks (columns) are linked.**
This develops the idea of Container Blocks used in Worked Example 3 to the case where one or more of the Blocks is available to both Year 12 and Year 13 students.
- 5. Keeping flexibility in Years 12 and 13 when some Blocks may span other Blocks.**
This adapts the idea of Container Blocks used in Worked Example 3 to the case where some Blocks or courses may span two or more Blocks, while still ensuring access to other Blocks.
- 6. Keeping Sixth Form flexibility using 'shadow-teachers'.**
This older method has now been superseded by the Container Block method (see Worked Examples 3, 4, 5) but is retained here for long-standing users.
- 7. Keeping Sixth Form flexibility using class-names.**
Another older method which is retained here for long-standing users.
- 8. Keeping Year 12 and Year 13 groups together.**
A variety of methods. For example, to keep Year-13 and Year-12 Games at the same time.

From time to time additional examples may be posted in the KnowledgeBase:

[Support Centre](#)

The examples below show a variety of curriculum diagrams being used by schools for Years 7 -11. Some of them are quite complicated, but in each case at least one solution is given. To save your time they are usually given with step-by-step instructions on what to do.

- 9. Using Container Blocks.**
This example takes the basic idea of Container Blocks (described in sections H24, H25) and applies it in more detail to a Block of subjects where there is split-teaching.
You are advised to read this before using Container Blocks in any of the examples below.
- 10. Specifying teacher-teams which are not quite consistent.**
In this example, PE is mixed up with the French sets so the teacher-team varies.
Two ways of dealing efficiently with this are described here.
 - a) Using Global DayBlocking.
 - b) Using Container Blocks.
- 11. Squeezing 'consistently-setted' activities into a fixed number of timetabled periods.**
For example, keeping different 'Coordinated Science' lessons grouped together in Year-9.
These two pages give step-by-step details of how to deal efficiently with this common problem, while keeping the flexibility available for FIT 'musical-chairs' moves.
- 12. Keeping 'consistent sets' for more than one subject.**
This looks at a method of keeping subject-groups together without using Container Blocks.
- 13. Blocks of 'consistently-setted' subjects.**
This method discusses one of the checks you can apply to see if a Block of subjects is mathematically possible, and then shows how to schedule it using Container Blocks.
- 14. Three blocks of 'consistently-setted' subjects.**
This shows a more-complicated curriculum with 3 big Blocks of consistently-setted subjects.
Two ways of tackling the problem are given:
 - a) Using clashing class names.
 - b) Using Container Blocks.
- 15. Another example of subject-blocking.**
Two solutions are given:
 - a) Using Container Blocks.
 - b) Using clashing class names.
- 16. Block within blocks**
A more complicated curriculum, with a step-by-step solution using Container Blocks.
- 17. Scheduling internal or 'mock' examinations.**
Some ideas to experiment with.
- 18. Combining two year-groups.**
What to do when classes from different year-groups join together for some lessons.
- 19. Dealing with half-classes.**
What to do when two halves of a class follow a different timetable.
- 20. Scheduling cover for staff absences.**
But see **StaffCover** for a much better method.
- 21. Keeping groups of subjects together in blocks.**
This method uses a different technique, using Special Resources acting as dummy teachers.
- 22. Keeping groups of subjects together in blocks.**
Another example of a complicated curriculum, with a solution using Container Blocks.